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9 October 1953

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Assistant Director/Current Intelligence  
**Attention:** [REDACTED] 25X1A

**SUBJECT:** IAC Action and Discussion on the  
Watch Committee Problem

**REFERENCE:** IAC-M-124 dated 6 October 1953,  
Items 3 and 4

1. Subject action and discussion are reflected in referenced IAC Minutes. Necessarily, by IAC practice, those Minutes do not transcribe the entire discussion. This being the case, it is understood that OCI might be helped by as many more complete renditions of the discussion as are available. Accordingly, and as we discussed I offer you herewith a transcript of my own notes, which you may care to join with those taken by yourself, [REDACTED] and others:

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a. The DCI said that we in CIA have all been giving thought to this matter, as he was sure the members had. We felt that the Watch Committee was one of the most important intelligence functions and we were reexamining our duties and responsibilities in connection with the Watch Committee. He felt that the machinery now set up was a great improvement over that of four years ago. We are now, however, entering upon a new era; the paper prepared by General Willems is in large measure predicated on this fact. The new era is typified by the atomic progress of the USSR, the related problem of our continental defense, and the fact that economic and political factors are assuming new importance. The disposition and movement of troops is not now the only vital question. He said that he had no preconceived views, but he felt that the changes over the last four years justified our taking time to have a thorough review of the watch to see if it is set up as well as can be to meet these new factors. Therefore, he favored a high level committee to consider General Willems' presentation, CIA's ideas, and those of others. He would nominate Ting Sheldon to

ARMY, DOE, DOS review(s) completed.

NAVY review(s) completed.

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represent CIA and would ask the others to appoint equally high-level people. The committee could then come to the IAC with its recommendations respecting the watch. He then asked General Partridge if G-2 wished to elaborate on the Willems' paper and Partridge asked General Willems to speak to the matter.

b. General Willems said he felt that the paper spoke largely for itself, but he would be pleased to elaborate on it and try to answer any questions that the members had. He said it was his hope to improve the mechanism of the watch operation in two ways: (1) by providing a system for readily, and partially visual, check on the implications of the indicators; and (2) to provide a "memory in depth" for the committee, e.g., a mechanical device for keeping track of indicators. He said the Committee had been struck by the utility of the Colorado Springs indicators board when the Watch Committee visited that site. He knew that a board alone was incipiently dangerous and that the center (i.e., a group of people conversant with the way in which their respective agencies handled the problem) was absolutely necessary in addition to the indications board. He emphasized that his proposal was not the final word but merely one step along the way in providing a better watch system. He said he realized some of our indicators were out of date and that we needed a complete reappraisal of them.

c. Dexter McKee of G-2 said that he had always felt that a central point for integration was basic to the watch system. The difficulty arose in getting the agencies to transmit their data. This proposal sought to assure that transmission by getting the agencies to send their representatives to a central point.

(The Director then went around the table asking for the members' views.)

d. Mr. Armstrong said that the Department of State had always been sympathetic with the problems of the Watch Committee and thought that Committee an important member of the intelligence family. He said he felt the Willems' proposal

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was a step forward and that State was ready to participate in it. He said he felt exactly the same way about the DCI's suggested committee.

e. Admiral Espe said that ONI agreed in principle and that Navy felt that we needed a conservative start in improving the watching process and that Willems' proposal appeared to be it. He favored the suggested high-level committee. He felt it necessary to point out that shortages of personnel would unfortunately limit Navy's ability to participate in an increased watch operation.

f. Mr. Kuhrts stated that the FBI considered General Willems' proposal as a start in revitalizing the watch. Like Navy, FBI was short of personnel. The Director indicated that he felt FBI participation was most necessary, with which Mr. Kuhrts agreed.

g. Dr. Reichardt said the AEC was for both the Willems' paper and the suggested committee and also pointed out personnel shortages affecting the ability of his agency.

h. General Porter spoke at some length. He pointed out that the Air Force had pioneered in indications board development, over his own objection. He said that his objection had been, and is, that, while we are playing for keeps it is dangerous at the same time to be trying to build the mechanisms we need. He felt that it was all right to explore new techniques so long as they were restricted to the developmental field and at the same time the old mechanisms were kept operating until the newer ones had been thoroughly tested. (Mr. Dulles said this was understood.) He said that a graphical-mathematical solution to this problem has obviously great advantages but that his experience with consultants whom he had asked to explore this possibility was that the consultants were not very optimistic that there was much immediate promise in such a solution. He said, however, that he was for the Willems' proposal and that he was for the committee suggested by Mr. Dulles.

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i. General Samford said that he had difficulty phrasing his remarks since he was afraid that they would be misunderstood. He did want to say that in his view we are just on the threshold of stating the problem. We have been experimental to date. He is for the indications center, but not at this moment. He felt that this problem needed the breadth of leadership that CIA could give us. The problem, he said, transcends what any one agency can do or the services. We should broaden out more. He suspects that the Colorado Springs operation is on the wrong track but he realizes that the services cannot find out what the right track is without taking a broader view than they are able to do by themselves. He said he was for an over-all look before endorsing any new idea and that for that reason he welcomed the DCI's suggested committee.

j. General Cabell said that he felt it necessary to guard that the Watch Committee does not take over estimating. We must be careful not to create a new intelligence hierarchy. For these reasons, the watching process needs very clear terms of reference and procedures. He felt that CIA should draft one paper with those terms of reference and procedures and circulate it for the agencies' consideration. (There was at this point some colloquy between General Porter and Mr. Dulles and General Cabell as to the method of beginning the work of the special committee. General Porter seemed to want CIA's paper commented upon by the agencies prior to the beginning of the committee's work. Mr. Dulles said that he did not wish a committee formed in order to form another committee, and that meant that the CIA paper would be circulated and would then go to the special committee, which would consider it, General Willems' paper, and such other papers as the agencies chose to submit.)

k. The DCI summed up by saying that there was much in General Willems' paper which deserved to be studied; that there seemed to be general approval of his suggestion to form a special committee; that, therefore, the agencies should send the names of the nominees to Mr. Sheldon, who would fix a time and place for the first meeting, at which the committee would select its chairman and adopt its rules and proceed immediately to consider those papers submitted. He said

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that the special committee, having considered all papers before it, would prepare a paper for the IAC. This paper might well go to the NSC, and this would be helpful to us all since the NSC has never fully understood the scope and limitations of the watch process. He felt it was necessary that the NSC and the President know "what we are" and "what we are not". He was sure that they did not have this knowledge, in view of the kinds of questions he repeatedly got on this subject. Therefore, he thought it would be useful to inform the NSC how we function, what we propose to do, what our gaps are, and the nature of our problems.

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**Secretary**  
**Intelligence Advisory Committee**

OIC/RDD:br (8 October 1953)

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